

65. *Mr. Guinness.*] It seems to me that the witness has not understood the Minister's questions. When you tell us, Mr. Coutts, that eight hours from bank to bank is the time that a miner has to be underground, are you speaking of the custom that prevailed before the Act of November last year, or after the Act came into operation?—After the Act was passed.

66. Was a difference made in the time the miners had to be underground after the passing of that Act?—I do not think much alteration was made.

67. Have you taken into consideration, in answering the Minister's questions, this language in section 5 of the Act, which says, "Subject to the provisions of the Act, a miner shall not be employed underground for a longer period in any day than eight hours, exclusive of meal-times"?—Yes.

68. You understand the meaning of that?—Yes.

69. Namely, that a miner must be underground eight hours, *plus* the time that it takes to eat his meal. If it takes him half an hour to have his meal he has to be underground eight hours and a half, and if he takes a quarter of an hour eight hours and a quarter?—Yes.

70. How did you come to tell Mr. McGowan that a miner would put in only seven hours' work under the law as it now stands?—If he goes from bank to bank it is eight hours.

71. Exclusive of meal-time?—Yes. But I am speaking of the Auckland District. I say they are working eight hours from bank to bank.

72. I want to know whether it is not a fact, if they carry out the provisions of the law, that the only time that is not to be reckoned is the time they are engaged in taking their meals. Mr. McGowan has extracted from you evidence to the effect that under the operation of this law a miner is engaged at the face for only seven hours, and I want you to correct your evidence so as to show that he is engaged seven hours and a half. A miner goes to the pit or tunnel mouth at 8 o'clock in the morning to commence his work. It takes him a quarter of an hour to get to the face. That is what you have said?—Yes.

73. Then he continues to work until meal-time; then he knocks off for about half an hour to take his meal. He then goes to work again till knocking-off time, and it takes him a quarter of an hour from the time he knocks off to get to the surface. Well, now, will you please add up that time, having in view the language of this section of the Act of last session, and tell us how long you reckon he is actually at work at the face?—If he is only eight hours from the surface, and takes half an hour for crib, that must leave seven hours.

74. *The Chairman.*] Do you know the hours at which the men go on to work and the hours at which they knock off?—I think it is about half-past 7.

75. *Mr. Guinness.*] Is it a fact that the mine-owners allow the men to ignore this provision in the Act which says "exclusive of meal-times"?—That is what I understand is the time. I am not there to see it done myself, but I understand that is what is done.

76. You cannot tell us for certain from what you have observed by your own inspection—you have never had this point under your notice?—That is what I understand. I have seen the men go on and come off on different occasions, but not go on and come off on the one day.

77. *The Chairman.*] You have got a lot of mines to inspect?—Yes; the whole of the Auckland District.

78. Gold-mines as well as coal-mines?—Yes.

79. *Mr. Guinness.*] Do you think that by lessening the number of hours the men are underground it will tend to make the occupation more healthy for the miners?—Decidedly it will.

ROBERT TENNENT examined. (No. 2.)

80. *The Chairman.*] What is your name?—Robert Tennent.

81. What are you?—Inspector of Gold and Coal Mines for the Marlborough, Westland, and Nelson Districts.

82. Have you ever been in any other districts?—No.

83. *Mr. Guinness.*] Will you tell us whether the Mining Act Amendment Act past last November, altering the hours of working for the miners, has been taken advantage of in any of the mines at Denniston, Reefton, Blackball, or Brunner?—The amendment has been strictly carried out.

84. What do you say is the meaning of the clause, and what is the way in which you have seen it carried out?—The men starting work at 8 o'clock knock off at 4. There is no allowance over the eight hours for meal-time. Whatever time is given for meal-time is included in the eight hours.

85. But the Act says, eight hours underground "exclusive of meal-times"?—That is in the eight hours' time that the men are in the mine. In all our big collieries the day's work is regulated by the haulage.

86. What is the usual time allowed for meal-time in the coal-mines in the Denniston district?—Fifteen minutes for meal-time.

87. And in the Reefton mines?—Half an hour.

88. That is, the quartz-mines?—Yes.

89. In the Blackball Coal-mine?—I think it is half an hour there.

90. In the Brunner Coal-mine?—The same time, I think.

91. In your opinion, what effect will the decreasing of the hours of work underground have upon the health of the miners: will it tend to render the occupation less unhealthy?—I do not think it will do much good. Of course, shorter hours would have a tendency to lengthen a man's life; but if I were asked as to an average day's work it would be a different thing altogether.

92. How much per day would you say the Act of last November has decreased the hours of underground work?—About half an hour—a full half-hour.